

Page A 2
 WASHINGTON POST
 23 August 1977

Soviet Weapons Gains Termed Costly

By Harrison Humphries
 Associated Press

During the past year the Soviet Union has continued to improve its military forces, but at increasing expense, the Defense Intelligence Agency estimates.

"The improvements cover the entire spectrum of weapons systems—from nuclear strategic forces to conventional general purpose forces," Lt. Gen. Samuel V. Wilson, DIA director, said in congressional testimony made public yesterday.

Wilson said, however, that the United States still maintains a substantial technological lead over the Russians, and other officials indicated that the readiness of Soviet forces tend to be inferior to that of U.S. forces.

The testimony was given June 30 at a closed-door hearing of the subcommittee on priorities and economy in government of the congressional Joint Economic Committee.

Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.), subcommittee chairman, released the excerpts and said in a statement, "It

is clear from the evidence that the Russians are spending more and enjoying it less."

Gen. Wilson estimated that the Soviet Union spent the equivalent of \$118 billion on defense programs in 1976, compared with \$84 billion for U.S. defense expenditures.

The Soviet procurement of weapons has grown annually for the past decade and in 1976 reached 141 per cent of the 1 level, Wilson said. He estimated that the Russians now exceed the U.S. weapons procurement effort by 114 per cent.

In research and development, "the Soviets clearly exceed the U.S. effort evidenced by the development of new systems," Wilson said.

In response to questions, Wilson agreed with the conclusion stated earlier by Adm. Stansfield Turner, Central Intelligence Agency director, that "while virtually all of the Soviet inventory of weapons falls within U.S. production technology, the Soviets simply do not have the technology required to produce many of the U.S.

weapons, nor could they produce close substitutes."

But Wilson said Soviet production technology has become increasingly sophisticated "and the Soviet Union is steadily gaining the ability to produce complex systems." With this ability, he added, comes inevitable cost increases.

Proxmire said the use of storable liquid fuel in Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), rather than the more efficient solid fuel in U.S. missiles, is an example of the Soviet lag in technology.

He said the testimony shows also that the readiness of Soviet ICBMs is low compared with U.S. ICBM readiness, that the Soviets deploy only one out of six naval ships at sea compared with one out of three U.S. ships, that the number of flight hours per month is significantly less for Soviet aircraft than U.S. aircraft, and that a large number of tanks in Soviet combat units are maintained in a short-term storage status at any given time.